

## SPORTS

## Smith playing bigger role than expected for Duke

BY STEVE WISEMAN  
Durham Herald Sun

DURHAM — Backcourt upheaval? No problem.

Playing 40 minutes a game? Bring it on.

When the top-ranked Blue Devils have needed him the most, Duke senior Nolan Smith has emerged as the team's top player, allowing Duke to survive adversity unscathed.

Comfortable teaming with talented freshman Kyrie Irving over the first eight games, Smith had to adjust his game when Irving suffered a toe injury that has kept him out of action for the past month.

Smith has responded with four consecutive games with at least 20 points, including Sunday night's 28-point performance in a 74-63 win over Miami in Duke's ACC opener.

Smith averages a team-best 18.6 points while leading the ACC with 5.6 assists per game.

Smith established himself as one of the nation's top players on the 2009-10 national championship squad. He scored a career-best 29 points, playing all 40 minutes, in Duke's 78-71 win over Baylor in the South Regional final at Houston, Texas, on March 28.

Against Miami this

week, he played all 40 minutes again and impressed even his teammates who see him practice and play every day.

"Nolan is playing great right now," Duke sophomore guard Andre Dawkins said. "Throughout [the Miami] game, he really carried us on the offensive and defensive end.

"He has to play the whole game and play arguably one of the best guards in the ACC. He played with a lot of passion and a lot of heart. He never gets tired out there, and he has one of the toughest assignments on the team, night in and night out. He really gives

us a lift."

Smith's latest lift to the team came as the Blue Devils (13-0) dealt with Irving's injury. Smith initially moved to point guard, scoring two points but handing out a career-best 10 assists in an 83-48 win over Bradley on Dec. 8 in the first game played without Irving.

After that game, though, the coaching staff implored him to not lose his scoring drive, as the team really needed it. Seth Curry entered the starting lineup because of his ball-handling skills. Dawkins, a starter against Bradley, became the sixth man with serious scoring punch once

again.

Smith went back to scoring in bunches, either by sinking a 3-pointer or driving the lane.

"He is being a great leader," Duke coach Mike Krzyzewski said.

Smith has made 53.9 percent of his field-goal tries, including 40.8 percent (20-of-49) on 3-pointers. He's just shy of the coveted 2-to-1 assist-to-turnover ratio, having dished out 73 assists to 40 turnovers.

Fellow senior Kyle Singler also is getting in on the production, averaging 21.1 points over the Blue Devils' last four games to push his season average to 17.5 points a game. He also played 40 minutes

against the Hurricanes. But Krzyzewski isn't concerned about his two seniors getting worn out.

"Guys don't get worn out with just games," Krzyzewski said. "They get worn out by playing the games you play sometimes between games. And you've just got to be careful with what they're doing. (Johnny) Dawkins and (Tommy) Amaker and all those guys, they played a lot of minutes."

With Irving's return not imminent, the minutes will continue to come Smith's way on the perimeter. The senior is showing he knows what to do with them.

## EFFORT

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of the half, scoring the final eight points to take its largest lead at 43-23.

"There were maybe two or three minutes in the second quarter where we started playing fast instead of playing hard and smart, and that's where we got down by 20," Leonard said. "I told our kids that we couldn't outrun these guys. They're going to press us and we have to break the press and then slow it down when we get to half court. If they go zone, get in our zone offense, and if they go man, let's run our sets. If we can do that, we'll get scoring opportunities. But we had some shots go in and out."

The Panthers clawed back to within 13 scoring the first seven points of the second half, but Benjamin's 3-pointer jump-started a 16-5 run to quarter's end, capped by a dunk from Donavan Gilmore.

Ledford played under control over the final quarter, though the buckets were still hard to come by. The Panthers kept playing hard as if it were a close game, walking away with something positive for the future.

Sports Editor Zach Kepley can be reached at 888-3631, or kepley@twilentimes.com.



Daniel Lawson and the Ledford Panthers put together a strong second half effort after getting down to Northeast Guilford 43-23 in the first half Tuesday.

TIMES PHOTO/DAVID YEMM

## AREA SPORTS BRIEFS

### BASKETBALL Lady Eagles drop Randleman

Amanda Baker and Chelsea Turner each collected 11 points to help lead East Davidson by Randleman 59-46 Wednesday evening in Randleman.

Ariel Grimsley also added eight to the winning effort.

East Davidson improves its record to 10-3, and will open Central Carolina Conference play on Friday at home against Lexington.

### Stars coaching applications

The High Point Stars basketball program is now accepting applications for a coach.

Contact Aaron Grier at 991-0597, or agrier\_hps@yahoo.com if interested.

### WRESTLING

**East stung by Jackets**  
East Davidson won just five matches in falling to Lexington 52-27 Tuesday evening.

Winners for the Golden Eagles were Alex Paniagua (119, forfeit), Jamar Harrington (125, decision), Gabriel Torres (135, pin), Brad Hutchins (140, pin) and Josh White (Hvy, forfeit).

East dips to 2-7

### Ledford places second

Ledford competed in the R.J. Reynolds Invitational last week, finishing

second out of 12 teams with a 162. Davie won the event with a 250.

Placing for the Panthers were Tyler Hinch (112, 3rd), Austin Deberry (119, 3rd) Shabazz Butt (130, 1st) Michael Pounds (135, 2nd), Cody Doyle (140, 1st) and Coley Garner (145, 3rd).

### Panthers pin McMichael

Ledford participated in the Southern Scuffle held in Greensboro last week, defeating McMichael 45-23.

Winners for the Panthers were Nick Craven (103, decision), Austin Deberry (119, forfeit), Tommy Taylor (125, pin), Michael Pounds (130, decision), Shabazz Butt (135, forfeit), Chance Manus (145, decision), Cody Essick (160, pin), De Greene (171, pin) and Sam Henderson (Hvy, decision).

Ledford is now 15-3.

### GENERAL

#### Concealed handgun class

There will be a concealed handgun class Jan. 22 at the Fairgrove Fire Department. The class is from 8 a.m.-5 p.m. This class is mandatory for anyone wishing to get a concealed handgun permit.

To sign up for the class call instructor Jason Livingston at 687-0290 or go by the fire department.

## LEDFORD

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the Rams scored again, Ledford was up 22-4 and eventually played all of its players.

Thomas opened the sec-

ond half with a 3-pointer, which was followed up by the only two consecutive baskets of the contest for the Rams. Chelsea Freeman scored six points in a 10-2 run to end the third quarter, as Ledford had pushed its advantage to 44-12.

"We did not shoot the ball as well as we would like to," Ralls said. "That being said, we worked through that and did some other things. We moved the ball a little bit more against the zone and attacked it a little bit better and a little bit

more intelligently than we did in the games we've gotten beat. Those are the things we've got to keep doing."

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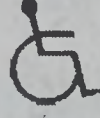
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